



Tips and Tonics for Healthier Radio Clubs

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“Successful radio clubs are a joy to experience. Easy to spot, they are usually populated by enthusiastic, gung-ho members who are involved with a full agenda of interesting things. They are generally at the center of most Amateur Radio activities in town.”



What makes a radio club successful?

- What secrets enable them to keep adding members, providing interesting activities and offering interesting programs?
- Many radio clubs have pondered these questions over the years. Here is a list of eight tips for a healthier radio club.



Have Fun!

- The first sign of great radio club is that it is a fun place for hams to go.
- If it is fun, they will come, but if club meetings are long and boring, the future is dark.
- Active clubs are healthy clubs.
 - Building friendships
 - Mentoring new hams
 - Operating events
 - Are a good way to showcase Amateur Radio to the public
 - Help recruit new hams.
 - If meetings get to the point with plenty of light-hearted and fun things on the program, and there is a warm welcome waiting, members (and visitors) will enjoy coming -- and they will return.



Give 'Em What They Want

- Good clubs have good programs.
- The most popular programs will meet the needs and interests of the members, so it pays to stay in touch with them.
- How? By listening.
- Talk with them and solicit feedback.
 - Ask members to list their favorite program topics and invite ideas for guest speakers and activities.
 - Ask what they do not want.
 - Have them evaluate and rate programs and speakers.
 - Check other clubs in the area for the names of good speakers.
 - Find out who in your own club has a skill, talent or specialized knowledge that would make a good program.



Publish a Good Newsletter

- A radio club newsletter fills the need to promote the next meeting and program while reporting a variety of important club news such as plans for:
 - Field Day, fox hunts, committee meetings, nets, social events, hamfests and emergency drills.
- The club newsletter is also an informal history of the organization
 - Can include the minutes of meetings
 - Recognition of the volunteers who stepped up and made things happen.
- The newsletter is often the only tangible thing a member receives for their dues
- The club should strive to make it the best quality possible.
 - Finding a good editor who will accept the major responsibility for writing and producing it **on time** is a top priority, and can be difficult.
 - Good editors make good newsletters, and good newsletters are found in good radio clubs.
 - Even novice editors will find a wealth of help in popular software and reference books, so putting a newsletter together is fairly simple.



Tap the Talent

- Radio clubs lack employees or paid staff – Members must do everything.
- The club depends upon having enough volunteers.
 - If there is one sad theme heard again and again in most clubs, it is this:
 - "We don't have enough volunteers. The same few people do all the work."
- Radio clubs must tap their talent pool.
 - A skills inventory is helpful in identifying those with special talent or training
 - Electronic engineers, lawyers, writers, mechanics and so on.
- Getting enough volunteers is not just a matter of shaming members into doing things. They need to be *ASKED* with respect.
- The club needs to do a good job of recognizing them and making them stars of the organization.
 - Make a sincere public "thank you" during a club meeting, followed by a written acknowledgment in the newsletter.
 - If a club takes its volunteers for granted and ignores recognition, this precious talent pool may soon dry up.
- Issue a Press Release to the local media listing those members who are being honored.
- The way a club treats its volunteers influences the rest of members.



Stay Active

- **Good clubs offer members a variety of activities.**
 - The club meeting is no substitute for fun things like Field Day, fox hunts, emergency drills, social nights, antenna parties and picnics.
- **Active clubs give their members many interesting opportunities to participate.**
 - Operating events, for example, allow many members to participate.
 - Field Day is a classic opportunity for fun and public service
 - Special event stations can create enjoyable fellowship
- **Staying active is a good growth tonic.**
- *If the main action in your club is drinking coffee, its future is doomed.*



Use Radio Communications

- Having a club whose members possess personal radio communication capabilities is a great asset.
- Having an informal club net can promote fellowship among members while allowing discussion of club activities between regular meetings.
- Special features can be included, such as ARRL bulletins, a DX bulletin board, swap and shop, group trouble-shooting of technical problems or details on new equipment.



Promote Fellowship

- **Help hams meet others and promote mutual help.**
- **Elmers helping newcomers**
 - Often the first opportunity that hams have to demonstrate fellowship.
- **Together, radio club members can do much more than any individual is able to do.**
 - Erecting antennas, helping with license exams, troubleshooting, enjoying social events, sponsoring hamfests, providing emergency communications
- **Activities are why radio clubs remain popular.**
- **Social events**
 - Annual awards dinner, informal gatherings, etc.
- **Above all, make visitors and newcomers feel welcome.**
 - A greeting, handshake, a round of introductions
 - Get people involved as quickly as possible
- **Sure signs of a club whose future is bright**



Recruit New Members

- **Clubs must recruit new members to insure their survival.**
 - Members leave for various reasons, and without a plan to replace them, clubs will stagnate.
- **Promotion is important.**
 - Keeping the club name before the public and other hams should be a continuing effort.
 - Use news releases regularly to announce club meetings, Field Day, emergency drills, new officers and social events.
- **Invite newly licensed hams to your club meetings.**
 - Have a membership drive to encourage your current members to recruit new ones.
 - Mail your newsletter to area hams with a special invitation to a future meeting, or send it via e-mail.
 - Encourage members to bring guests.



In Conclusion

- Opportunities to promote membership are limited only by a club's imagination and resources.
- In summary, there are numerous factors that determine the success and longevity of radio clubs.
- So use these tips for an examination of your club's health, and here's hoping it is in good shape.



About the Author

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